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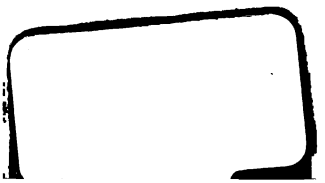

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A BALLAD OF BULL RUN.

WILL RUSSELL was a writer rare,
Of genius and renown,
A war-trained correspondent he
From famous London town.

On Indian and Crimean coasts
He wrote of guns and drums,
And now as through our land he posts,
To Washington he comes.

Will Russell said to chosen friend,
"Though four months I have been
In search of some great Yankee fight,
No skrimmage have I seen.

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"To-morrow's sun will see a fight
On Bull Run's banks, they say;
So there, my friend, we'll early go,
All in a *two-'oss shay*.

"I'll also take a saddle-horse
To bear the battle's brunt,
Whereon, in my Crimean style,
I'll see the flight *in front*.

"And I will don the coolest of
My Himalayan suits —
My belt, felt hat, revolver, and
My old East Indian boots.

"Fresh stores of pens I'll surely need,
And foolscap, too, I think;
And in one holster snugly thrust
A pint of Dovell's ink.

"While in the bottom of the gig
We'll stow the choice Bordeaux,
And eke this bottle of *cold tea* —
To cool us off, you know!

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"And for that, in this heathen land,
The grub is all a sham,
I've here wrapped up some sausage, too,
And sandwiches of 'am.

"Experience on Crimean shores
Has taught me how to forage,
And how these creature comforts tend
To keep up martial courage."

Smack! went his lips at thought thereof,
Off rolled the Yankee gig,
Before the shouts and rolling whites
Of starers, small and big!

Like clouds of dust his spirits rise,
While merry cracks the whip;
The led-horse pranced and "bobbed around"
Like porpoise round a ship.

The Long Bridge planks jumped up and down
In sympathetic jig —
They little thought he would return
Minus the "creaking gig."

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That rotten Rubicon is passed,
And likewise frowning "Runyon" —
Its outline marked with many a black
Columbiad on its trunnion.

Past fields where just the day before
The harvest-scythe was sweeping,
They rushed where soon its human sheaves
Death's sickle would be reaping!

As rise the distant cannon's tones,
So mounts his martial ardor,
His thoughts half on the work "in front"
Half on his meagre larder.

At length he's there at Centreville!
In sight and sound of what
He came so far to see and sketch,
Where rained the shell and shot!

But ere he ventures, careful soul!
To reach that scene of death,
He seeks a cool and shady place
"To give his horses breath."

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Then forth he draws the precious stores, —
Cold tea, Bordeaux, and 'am, —
'Mid cannon-shots and bottle-pops,
Enjoys his lunch and dram.

The dubious issue of the fight
Contents him with his seat,
Until a courier from the field
Reports the foe's retreat!

Up sprang Will Russell from the charms
Of tea and 'am so vile —
His toilet for "the front" prepares
In his Crimean style.

"My 'oss! my 'oss! quick, bring it me!
What would the *Thunderer* say,
If they should end this Bull Run fight,
While I lunch in my *shay?*"

His "Indian" sack hangs down and hides
Each short and sturdy limb;
His hat o'erhangs his jolly form
With amplitude of brim.

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Beneath its shade, his round, red face
Flames like St. George's banner:
While from its rim, in *havelock* style,
A buff and red bandanna!

In guise like this, he grandly mounts
And starts in warlike trot,
That *did not* turn to gallop as
He neared the deadly spot.

But lo! a motley frightened crowd
Before him doth appear,
Of such as ever follow camps,
All hurrying to the rear.

And pushing through this heaving mass
Of human breakers, soon
He found himself 'mid reeling ranks,
Battalion and platoon!

But 'mid that frightened crowd, he says
He only kept his wits,
And puffs, and scolds, and wonders, too,
What trouble "gave them fits!"

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"I do declare! What means all this?
What has your vict'ry nipped?
Why run you so?" — the sole reply
Was panted forth, "We're whipped!"

"Dear me! I fain would get in front!
How would the people stare,
If Fame should ask my whereabouts,
And echo say, '*the rear!*'

"You cravens, stand! *why* do you run?
Return to the assault!"
Bang! bang!—a shell bursts o'er his head—
Will Russell calls a halt!

"Aw! that *was* near! no further need
For me to make researches—
I'll simply book what I have seen,
Behind yon grove of birches."

Bang! bang! "Aw! there's another shell!
And one that is a screamer;
And, let me think—I must leave now,
To write by Wednesday's steamer!

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"And though my steed has come to-day
Full thirty miles and better,
Needs must he now to take me back
To mail my battle-letter."

He turns his horse! both are afloat
On the retreating wave!
But as he struggles back, he scoffs
In words — not accents brave.

To clear the road and let him pass,
He hails each runaway;
But their respect for *rank*, alas!
Is broke and done away!

Wagon and cart, and man and beast,
All in the turnpike jammed;
Mess pork and hams, and shot and grain, —
No thoroughfare so dammed!

The dainty stores that fed "the staff"
Mixed with the private's fare!
Sad waste! "O, what, my countrymen,
A falling off was there!"

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The teamsters "cut and ran," and left;
No *traces* you could find;
While those afoot from horsemen feared
A dreadful "cut behind!"

"The Cavalry!" at that dread sound
Will's courage was bereft him;
Although he tried, by valiant words,
To show it had not left him.

And eke before his mental eye
The dreadful vision rose,
Of that warm suit the Southern press
Had threatened him for clothes!

"That threat! when 'tis so 'orrid 'ot—
Beyond East Indian weather!
How my too solid flesh would melt
In suit of tar and feather!"

His anxious looks, yet valiant words,
Make many jeer and hoot him,
While every random shot he fears
Is some attempt to shoot him.

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While thus he trembles for his life,
By coward taunt and curse,
So, to his eye, each ambulance
Seems an untimely hearse!

At each artillery "thud" he hears,
Up close his legs he tucks,
Then down upon his saddle bow
His anxious visage ducks!

And eke behind his Indian sack
Swells in balloon-like manner,
While flaps and flies around his neck
The buff and red bandanna!

Again he's back at Centreville,
In search of friend and gig;
"They are not here! nor 'am, nor tea—
They're just the things to prig.

"O for a glass of wine, or slice
Of those fine wasted 'ams!—
But though there's plenty on the road,
They're no longer Uncle Sam's!

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"So now for Washington, my steed!
It is no use to whine;
You brought me here to see a fight,
Now take me back to dine!"

A sudden squad of fugitives
Here through the village fled,
And Bill's great fancy for the front
Soon placed him at their head.

But as he leads the flying herd
Adown a hill's decline,
Behold, across the road drawn up
A regiment in line!

"What brings you here?" the Colonel shouts.
"Back! back! I say: I'll shoot
The coward that across my ranks
Would dare to place his foot!"

The herd recoils, save Russell wild,
Who fumbling in his vest:
"But, sir — you know! — I'm English! Come!
You must not me arrest!

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"I have a pass — aw! here it is!
'Tis signed by General Scott —
Don't keep me here!" "Pass this man up!"
Replied the Colonel, hot.

Nor time lost Will, as off he dashed,
In sudden bolt that snapped
A loop of sack and havelock both,
That now far rearward flapped!

At Fairfax Court House next he stops,
To breathe his horse and sup;
But here his rest by Boniface
Is quickly broken up.

Quoth he, "They fear Virginia's horse?
Well may they, stranger, when
These mountain riders number now
Full twenty thousand men!"

"Good 'eavens! no? — but do they though?"
Our startled hero cries,
Then off again, though cruel need,
To Washington he flies!

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Night finds him bravely spurring on
Past wood, and grove, and thicket,
With brave words frequent cheering up
Each watchful, anxious picket.

"What news? What news?" they all do shout.
Says Russell in reply:
"It is no rout! the army's safe!
Keep up your heart — don't fly!"

"Stop! stop! Bill Russell! tell us why,"
Loud after him they bawl,
"If all is safe, you run so fast,
Or why you run at all."

Yet on *he* flies; up hill, down dale,
In very ghost-like manner;
While ever rearward flaps and flies
The buff and red bandanna!

The night wanes on, the moon is up,
And soon our correspondent,
Though near his goal, with new-born fears
Grew suddenly despondent.

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"The guards are set upon the bridge;
Dear me, what fate is mine!
They'll hail me soon, and I may die
And give no countersign!"

His fears are vain — that vet'ran name
Is good, as you'll agree,
(As has been often said before,)
To pass him through, *Scott* free.

At last he's safe upon the bridge!
He sees the lights of town,
Mirrored in broad Potomac's tide,
Hang brightly dripping down!

Then droops his head, then droops his steed,
In sympathetic manner;
Then droops his sack, then droops also
The buff and red bandanna!

Can this be he that o'er these planks
At morning dashed so trig?
Revisiting beneath the moon
In such a dismal rig!

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The bridge is passed! and he again
Resumes his martial port,
And swells, and puffs, and comforts all
With words of valiant sort.

But sudden from the rising clouds
A vivid lightning flash!
"The foe!" he cries, and fearful lists
To hear the cannon's crash!

He's off again! up Fourteenth Street!
Once more, like ghostly banner,
Behind him dimly flaps and flies
The buff and red bandanna!

His rooms are reached, he bolts his door,
When lo! before his eyes,
A midnight supper ready spread,
To which he instant flies.

No time, by doffing hat or dress,
To balk his famished jaws!
But, Cassius-like, he "plunges in,
Accoutred as he was!"

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Sausage, and cheese, and 'am again,
With draughts of wine between,
Down that vast throat of British gauge,
In quick procession seen!

What grunts of bliss beneath that hat
O'er this unlooked-for manna!
While as he munched still rose and fell
The buff and red bandanna!

At last he's full! but quickly now
His brain is all astir,
To forge fit bolts of caustic for
His chief, the *Thunderer!*

His pen is drawn, and o'er his sheet
Fast its vocation plies,
In telling what he *thought* he saw —
Wherein his genius *lies!*

But soon the inspiration's o'er!
With wine and sausage pressed,
His eyelids close, his burly head
Down drops upon his breast.

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Hark to the thunders of his snore!
In deep, bassoon-like manner!
While with each swell still rose and fell
The buff and red bandanna!

Rest, Russell, rest! your race is o'er;
And well you won it, too!
For no such time was ever made
Since days of Waterloo!

Now let us sing, in jolly ring,
Great Russell's martial spree —
When next he goes to see a fight,
May he *get there* to see!

Ye poets! who may sing some day,
In strains, rich, racy, full,
The race from Bull Run, don't forget
The run of Mr. Bull.

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